

FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK PRESIDENT SANDS, PROVOST CYRIL CLARK, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS, VIRGINIA TECH VICE PRESIDENTS AND DEANS, FELLOW AWARD WINNERS, AND THE GRADUATING STUDENTS OF THE CLASS OF 2019.

IT IS AN HONOR TO STAND IN FRONT OF YOU TODAY. THANK YOU.

I WOULD LIKE TO ALSO RECOGNIZE THE PARENTS AND FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF OUR GRADUATES HERE TODAY. CONGRATULATIONS!

GRADUATES, I NEED TO TELL YOU RIGHT NOW, THE DAYS OF HANGING OUT AT TOP OF THE STAIRS, BIG AL'S AND SHARKEY'S ON YOUR PARENTS DIME ARE OVER . IT IS ON YOU NOW. WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD.

THE CLASS OF 2019 WILL ALWAYS HOLD A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART. WHEN YOU ENTERED AS FRESHMEN, I WAS ENTERING MY FINAL SEASON AS YOUR HEAD

FOOTBALL COACH. THE END OF A DREAM FOR ME AT VIRGINIA TECH AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CHAPTER FOR YOU.

MEMORIES THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME.

I HAVE WALKED THROUGH THAT TUNNEL 191 TIMES AS PLAYER AND COACH AT VIRGINIA TECH. TO LOOK OUT AND SEE THIS STADIUM ROCKING TO THE TUNE OF ENTER SANDMAN WAS A SIGHT TO SEE.

BUT TODAY, I CAN HONESTLY SAY, I AM MORE NERVOUS THAN ANY GAME WE EVER PLAYED HERE. I HOPE MY MESSAGE TO YOU TODAY, GIVES EACH OF US JUST ONE MORE VICTORY TOGETHER AND ONE MORE MEMORABLE TRIP THROUGH THAT TUNNEL.

TODAY I HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO REMEMBER THE FOUR PEOPLE I WILL SPEAK ABOUT, AND THE MESSAGE EACH OF THEM HAVE FOR YOU. JUST AS A FOOTBALL

GAME HAS FOUR QUARTERS, I HAVE FOUR INDIVIDUALS STORIES TO SHARE.

THE FIRST PERSON IS MY MOTHER HERMA BEAMER. MY MOTHER WAS A SCHOOL TEACHER FOR OVER 30 YEARS. SHE WAS A STRONG AND DETERMINDED WOMAN. SHE TAUGHT ME MANY THINGS GROWING UP, BUT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES SHE TAUGHT ME WAS HOW TO HANDLE ADVERSITY.

YOU SEE WHEN I WAS SEVEN YEARS OLD, I NEARLY DIED IN A GASOLINE EXPLOSION AT MY HOME. I WAS BURNED SEVERLY AND OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS I HAD MORE THEN 30 SURGERIES. THAT WAS ADVERSITY. BUT MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME NOT TO FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF. DURING EACH OF THOSE SUMMERS WHEN MY FRIENDS WERE PLAYING BASEBALL, SWIMMING AND HAVING FUN, I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL.

WHAT MY MOTHER MADE ME DO EACH DAY IN THE HOSPITAL IS MY MESSAGE TO YOU TODAY. MY MOTHER MADE ME GET OUT OF THE BED AND WALK THE HALLS OF THE HOSPITAL. HER MESSAGE TO ME WAS “YES INDEED YOU ARE FACING ADVERSITY, BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE FAR LESS FORTUNATE”. DEAL WITH YOUR SITUATION AND MOVE ON.

AS YOU EMBARK ON YOUR CAREERS, AND AS YOU PUT YOUR DEGREE FROM VIRGINIA TECH TO WORK, EACH OF YOU ARE GOING TO FACE ADVERSITY. IT IS GOING TO HAPPEN, SO PREPARE EACH DAY FOR IT. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY PREPARE EACH DAY FOR HOW YOU WILL REACT TO THE SITUATION. YOU MAY NOT CONTROL WHAT HAPPENS BUT YOU DO CONTROL HOW YOU WILL RESPOND. MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME THAT AT AN EARLY AGE BY **WALKING THE HALLS.**

THE SECOND PERSON I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IS A BASKETBALL COACH. A YOUNG

MAN THAT DIED OF CANCER AT AN EARLY AGE. I AM SURE MANY OF YOU KNOW THE NAME JIM VALVANO. HE WAS THE CHARISMATIC HEAD BASKETBALL COACH AT NORTH CAROLINA STATE. VALVANO'S TEAM SHOCKED THE SPORTS WORLD WHEN THEY WON THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP IN 1983.

I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION 2 THINGS JIM VALVANO DID THAT HAVE GREAT MEANING.

FIRST WE ALL KNOW THE TRADITION OF BASKETBALL TEAMS WINNING CHAMPIONSHIPS OF CUTTING DOWN THE NET. THAT IS THE SYMBOL OF A CHAMPION. EACH TEAM MEMBER AND COACH GET TO CLIMB THE LADDER AND CUT OFF A PIECE OF THE NET. BUT WHAT VALVANO DID IS MY MESSAGE TO YOU. EACH SEASON, HE WOULD DEVOTE AN ENTIRE PRACTICE TO THE PROPER PROCEDURE IN CUTTING DOWN THE NET. HE WOULD BRING THE LADDER OUT, HAVE EACH PERSON CLIMB IT AND PROPERLY CUT A PIECE OF THE NET

OFF AS HE INSTRUCTED THEM. THIS WOULD BE AN ENTIRE DAY OF PRACTICE.

AND WHAT EVENTUALLY HAPPENED, HIS 1983 TEAM GOT TO CUT DOWN THE NET. MY MESSAGE IS FOR YOU TO SET YOUR GOALS HIGH AND PRACTICE FOR THE DAY WHEN YOU WIN YOUR CHAMPIONSHIP.

SHORTLY BEFORE HIS PASSING, VALVANO MADE AN INSPIRATIONAL SPEECH DURING THE ESPY AWARDS.

HE SAID THE FOLLOWING:

“WE SHOULD DO THREE THINGS EVERY DAY OF OUR LIFE. WE SHOULD LAUGH. WE SHOULD THINK. WE SHOULD HAVE OUR EMOTIONS MOVED TO TEARS OF JOY OR TEARS OF SADNESS.”

THERE ARE A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE HELPED YOU GET HERE TODAY. MANY HAVE GIVEN YOU GUIDANCE, SUPPORT, AND A DIRECTION. MAKE SURE

YOU THANK THEM. TODAY, MAKE SURE YOU TELL THEM YOU LOVE THEM.

**ON THIS GREAT DAY OF CELEBRATION, I ASK YOU TO LAUGH, TO THINK AND TO BRING YOURSELF TO TEARS.**

WE ARE NOW IN THE 3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER, THE THIRD PERSON I WANT TO JOIN HERMA BEAMER AND JIM VALVANO IN SPEAKING WITH TODAY IS CHARLES PLUMB.

CHARLES PLUMB WAS A US NAVY JET PILOT IN VIETNAM. AFTER 75 COMBAT MISSIONS, HIS PLANE WAS DESTROYED BY A SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE. PLUMB EJECTED AND PARACHUTED INTO ENEMY HANDS. HE WAS CAPTURED AND SPENT 6 YEARS IN A COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE PRISON.

MANY YEARS LATER, PLUMB AND HIS WIFE WERE SITTING IN A RESTAURANT, A MAN AT ANOTHER TABLE CAME UP AND SAID, *“YOU’RE PLUMB! YOU FLEW JET FIGHTERS IN*

*VIETNAM FROM THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER  
KITTY HAWK. YOU WERE SHOT DOWN!"*

*"HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU KNOW  
THAT?" ASKED PLUMB.*

*"I PACKED YOUR PARACHUTE," THE MAN  
REPLIED.*

*PLUMB GASPED IN SURPRISE AND  
GRATITUDE. THE MAN PUMPED HIS HAND  
AND SAID, "I GUESS IT WORKED!"*

*PLUMB ASSURED HIM, "IT SURE DID. IF YOUR  
CHUTE HADN'T WORKED, I WOULDN'T BE  
HERE TODAY."*

*PLUMB COULDN'T SLEEP THAT NIGHT,  
THINKING ABOUT THAT MAN. PLUMB  
SAYS, "I KEPT WONDERING WHAT HE MIGHT  
HAVE LOOKED LIKE IN A NAVY UNIFORM: A  
WHITE HAT, A BIB IN THE BACK AND BELL-  
BOTTOM TROUSERS. I WONDER HOW MANY  
TIMES I MIGHT HAVE SEEN HIM AND NOT  
EVEN SAID 'GOOD MORNING, HOW ARE YOU?'  
OR ANYTHING, BECAUSE, YOU SEE,*

*I WAS A TOP GUN FIGHTER PILOT, AND HE WAS JUST A SAILOR."*

PLUMB THOUGHT OF THE MANY HOURS THE SAILOR HAD SPENT ON A LONG WOODEN TABLE IN THE BOWELS OF THE SHIP, CAREFULLY WEAVING THE SHROUDS AND FOLDING THE SILKS OF EACH CHUTE, HOLDING IN HIS HANDS EACH TIME, THE FATE OF SOMEONE HE DIDN'T KNOW.

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT FOR ME TO SHOW APPRECIATION FOR ALL OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE SUCCESS OF MY CAREER. NO MATTER WHAT ROLE THEY PLAYED IN WINNING A GAME OR IN MY PERSONAL LIFE, I ALWAYS TRIED TO THANK THEM.

**YOU KNOW WHO PACKED YOUR PARACHUTE. THANK THEM!**

THE FOURTH AND FINAL PERSON I WANT TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT IS COUNTRY SINGER TIM MCGRAW .

A SONG WRITER FOR TIM MCGRAW, LORI MCKENNA, WROTE A SONG IN TWO HOURS THAT WAS A MESSAGE SHE WANTED TO SEND TO HER CHILDREN.

I KNOW THERE IS A MESSAGE FOR EACH OF US IN TIM MCGRAWS SONG.

THE SONG TITLE IS "HUMBLE AND KIND."

TIM MCGRAW SINGS THE FOLLOWING:

"HOLD THE DOOR SAY PLEASE SAY  
THANK YOU.  
DON'T STEAL, DON'T CHEAT DON'T LIE.

I KNOW YOU HAVE MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB  
BUT ALWAYS STAY HUMBLE AND KIND".

MCGRAW CONTINUES:

"WHEN THE DREAMS YOU'RE DREAMING  
COME TO YOU  
WHEN THE WORK YOU PUT IN IS REALIZED  
LET YOURSELF FEEL THE PRIDE

BUT ALWAYS STAY HUMBLE AND KIND.”

“DON’T TAKE FOR GRANTED THE LOVE THIS  
LIFE GIVES YOU  
WHEN YOU GET WHERE YOU’RE GOING  
DON’T FORGET TURN BACK AROUND  
AND HELP THE NEXT ONE IN LINE

ALWAYS BE HUMBLE AND KIND”

THOSE ARE INDEED MEANINGFUL WORDS.

AS YOU BEGIN YOUR LIFE AFTER  
GRADUATION, THERE WILL BE TIMES WHEN  
IT SEEMS LIKE THERE IS A MOUNTAIN TO  
CLIMB. YOU ARE GOING TO FACE  
ADVERSITY-BUT YOU CAN CLIMB THE  
MOUNTAIN, YOU CAN MAKE IT TO THE  
PEAK. **MY MOTHER HERMA BEAMER  
TAUGHT ME TO DO THAT BY WALKING  
THE HALLS OF THE HOSPITAL.**  
YOU CAN DO IT BY PREPARING EACH DAY  
FOR HOW YOU WILL HANDLE ADVERSITY.

DREAM BIG.....

MCGRAW CONTINUES: "WHEN THE DREAMS YOU'RE DREAMING COME TO YOU, WHEN THE WORK YOU PUT IN IS REALIZED LET YOUR SELF FEEL THE PRIDE."

TODAY CELEBRATE YOUR DEGREE FROM VIRGINIA TECH.....LAUGH, THINK, BRING YOURSELF TO TEARS....YOUR DIPLOMA CAN LEAD YOU TO MANY MORE VICTORIES IN YOUR LIFETIME..... BE DETERMINED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

**JUST LIKE COACH JIM VALVANO...BE READY TO CUT DOWN THE NET.**

BACK TO MCGRAW...."

DON'T TAKE FOR GRANTED THE LOVE THIS LIFE GIVES YOU  
WHEN YOU GET WHERE YOU'RE GOING  
DON'T FORGET TO TURN BACK AROUND,  
AND HELP THE NEXT ONE IN LINE.

TODAY AND EVERY DAY I ENCOURAGE YOU TO THANK THOSE PEOPLE FOR ALLOWING

YOU TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT WE ARE  
CELEBRATING TODAY.

**CHARLES PLUMB TAUGHT US TO THANK  
THOSE WHO PACKED OUR PARACHUTES.**

**WHO PACKED YOUR PARACHUTE?**

AND FINALLY, I HOPE THAT WHEN YOU  
LEAVE HERE TODAY YOU WILL REMEMBER  
THE WORDS OF TIM MCGRAW AND FRANK  
BEAMER:

**ALWAYS BE HUMBLE AND KIND!**

GOD BLESS YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS.